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STUDY OF HOME DEMONSTRATION ORGANIZATION  
IN THE RURAL TOWNS OF SIX MASSACHUSETTS COUNTIES

Summary Statement

As an introduction to this study of the relative effectiveness of home demonstration organization in sample rural Massachusetts towns, we asked leaders and homemakers in the towns surveyed about their participation in Extension activities. The figures which we obtained were rather typical -- almost two-thirds of the homemakers had never attended a home demonstration meeting. About one-tenth attended a meeting during the past 12 months. About half of those interviewed, however, had made some attempt to get Extension information at some time.

As might be expected two-thirds of the leaders came from the mature but active ages of 35 to 54. They tended to have more education and to have better incomes than had the other homemakers.

Of the homemakers we found also the better educated and those having the higher incomes were the most frequent in attendance at the meetings and made other efforts to get information. Those homemakers with the least education and with the lowest incomes, on the other hand, were the least frequent in attendance at meetings and made the least effort to obtain information.

With this information about the people as a background we divided the sample towns by degrees of organization: A high degree of organization, less organization, and no home demonstration organization.

In the towns with high organization we found that the leaders continue in office (especially in the higher offices) for significantly longer periods than in towns where the organization is less. Besides this greater



willingness to remain in office, the leaders in towns with high organization performed (with unimportant exceptions) more functions than did the leaders in towns with less organization. Little difference was found in the apparent success of leaders in the towns with a high degree of organization and those with less organization, in interesting their people in home demonstration work.

The degree of organization played little part in determining the percentage of the homemakers who knew the professional workers but it did seem to be related to a knowledge of lay leaders and to an understanding of their jobs.

In regard to the kinds of participation, the homemakers in towns with a high degree of organization attended more meetings than did those in either of the other groups. This is to be expected since there were more meetings to attend in towns with a high degree of organization. But the homemakers in towns with no organization were about as active as those from towns having a high degree or less organization in the use of the other means of obtaining information.

In general the data presented seem to indicate that the rural towns of Massachusetts with a high degree of organization appear to have a slightly higher efficiency than those with less or with no home demonstration organization. It must not be concluded, however, that this apparent greater efficiency is the result of complexity in organization. Efficiency may spring from favorable conditions such as greater coverage, more representation or different groups, etc., which are related to a high degree of organization.

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